



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How many days are allowed for the completion and filing of a death record?

A death certificate must be filed within five (5) days from the date of death for each death that occurs in South Carolina.

What is the time period allowed for a physician to complete medical certification on a death record?

The medical certification must be completed and returned to the funeral director by the physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death within forty-eight (48) hours **after receiving notification** of the death, except when inquiry is required by medical examiner or coroner.

Does the 48 hours include weekends?

If the forty-eight hour period terminates on a weekend, federal holiday, or state holiday, the physician must complete the medical certification by the end of the next business day.

Who is considered “in charge of the patient’s care for the illness or condition which resulted in death?”

The attending physician.

What happens if the attending physician is not available to certify the cause of death?

In the absence of the physician or with his or her approval, the certificate may be completed by his or her associate physician, the chief medical officer of the institution in which death occurred, or the pathologist who performed an autopsy upon the decedent.

What happens if the death certificate is not filed on time?

DHEC may assess an administrative penalty against the physician or funeral home or funeral director. If a penalty is assessed, DHEC will also notify the Board of Medical Examiners or Board of Funeral Services, as appropriate.

How will funeral directors and physicians be notified when a penalty is assessed?

A notice of violation will be mailed to the funeral director and/or physician.

Will a funeral director or physician have an opportunity to provide information on good cause for the late filing?

The funeral director and/or physician upon receipt of a notice of violation will have 15 days to respond to DHEC to explain why the violation occurred. DHEC staff will use this information to determine if “good cause” exists. If good cause is shown, the penalty will not be assessed.

Will every violation result in a penalty?

DHEC retains discretion in all cases to determine whether to assess penalties. If the violation is a first offense and there is only one violation on the record, meaning one day late, a warning letter will be used with no penalty. Otherwise, a penalty will ordinarily be assessed, if good cause is not shown.

What amounts of penalties will be assessed?

Penalties will be:

- (i) two hundred fifty dollars for a first violation or a warning letter;
- (ii) five hundred dollars for a second violation; and
- (iii) one thousand dollars for a third or subsequent violation.

Each day of late filing is considered an additional violation.

What happens if the body is not assumed by the funeral home until days after the date of death? Will the funeral home be assessed a penalty?

The funeral director will have an opportunity to show good cause before the assessment of a penalty. If it is determined by DHEC investigation that good cause was shown, a penalty will not be assessed.

How do I determine if the medical certifier is participating in the WebDeath system?

The record must be designated to the physician. If the physician is participating in WebDeath, the name and address will appear in Medical tab 3. Once the medical certifier has been designated, he will receive an email notifying him a death is in the queue for completion of medical certification.

How do I retrieve a death record that has been initiated by the medical certifier?

The funeral home and medical certifier may not have access to the same key fields (social security number, medical record number or BRTP number) to link the record. Therefore, it is very important that the funeral home **CONTACT THE MEDICAL CERTIFIER** to obtain the information entered to start the record. Communication between funeral home and medical certifier is the key to completing a death certificate in a timely manner.

What should I do if my pin/password is not working?

The funeral director should check demographic tab 4 to ensure his/her name is listed in the field. The physician should verify his/her name is in the medical certifier field.

After verifying he/she is listed and pin/password are still not working:

- Contact the Field Consultants at 803-898-3409 between the hours of 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding state holidays.
- For security reasons, we must speak to the individual needing to have pin/password reset.